

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 21st February, 2025

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); and
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan, Bunting, Cobain,
de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Nelson and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Ms. S. Murtagh, Portfolio Manager, Property and Projects;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27th and 31st January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 3rd February, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Groogan, R-M Donnelly and Duffy declared an interest in item 7(a) Minutes of the Shared City Partnership in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS in that they worked for organisations which had applied for funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate, they were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Long declared an interest in items 2(d) Wider University and Lower Ormeau Intervention; and 2(e) Support for businesses affected by the August riots, in that his wife was Justice Minister, and he left the meeting while these items were under discussion.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following twelve items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following item as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

2024-25 Quarter 3 Finance Report

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee’s consideration a report providing information on the financial position of for Quarter 3 2024/25.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 3, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £2.8m, representing 2.1% of the net expenditure budget. The Quarter 3 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £2.4, representing 1.3% of the net expenditure budget.

The Director then provided updates on the 2024/25 reserves position, the rates finalisation 2024/25 and the capital projects.

The Committee noted:

- the Quarter 3 financial position;
- the forecast underspend of £2.4m and the Committee decision of 27th January to set aside 2024/25 and 2025/26 underspends to fund £2.8m medium term proposals as part of the 2025/26 rate setting process; and
- noted the Quarter 3 Treasury Management report.

Housing Led Regeneration Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Strategic Sites Assessment Phase 2 – Citywide and which sought approval for appointment of Preferred Housing Association Developer in respect of the Inner North West Development Brief.

The Committee:

1. Noted that the evaluation process had been completed for the Development Brief for lands in the Inner North West (Little Donegal Street, Kent Street and Library Street) and agreed the award of the Development Brief Preferred Developer to the Housing Association with the highest score, as set out in the report. This would be subject to terms to be agreed with the Director of City Regeneration and Development and the City Solicitor and subject also to the approval of the Department for Communities (as joint landowner) through their own governance processes. Noted also that continued working would be required with the appointed Housing Association towards the successful delivery of a viable scheme recognising that issues and barriers continue to impact in the delivery of city centre housing schemes.
2. Noted the progress on the Strategic Site Assessments Phase 2 Citywide and agreed that the initial tranche of 11 sites as set out in the report are brought forward for housing led regeneration, with updates to be brought back to the Committee as this work progresses. Noted also that the detail on the delivery route for individual sites would be subject to further consideration and Committee approvals.
3. Noted the update on the potential placemaking pilots across the city.
4. Noted the update on the Private Sector Partner, including the Strategic Partnership Agreement; the emerging governance and engagement proposals and Business Plans process which would all be brought back to Committee at the various stages.

The Committee agreed also that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the use of capital receipts in connection with housing.

NICS Collaboration Test and Learn Initiative

The Committee considered a report which provided the Members with an update on the work underway by NICS to bring forward a Collaboration Test and Learn pilot in North Belfast and which sought Council representation on the associated Steering Group overseeing this work.

The Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report, including the evaluation report as set out at Appendix 1;
- ii. noted the proposed draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Group as attached at Appendix 2; and
- iii. agreed to put forward a nomination from the Community Planning team for the Steering Group.

Wider University and Lower Ormeau Intervention

The Committee considered a report which provided the Members with an overview of the feedback received from Inter-Agency Group (IAG) partners towards the proposed extension of an Area Intervention Manager position up to 2028 aligned with the delivery of the agreed 4-year WULO Action Plan; and the proposed next steps in relation to this work.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McDonough-Brown,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Committee agrees to the potential financial contribution from the Council towards the match-funding of the post as set out at paragraphs 4.6-4.7 of the report.

On a vote, fourteen Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was declared carried.

The Committee also noted the feedback received from Inter-Agency Group partners as set out in the report.

Support for businesses affected by August riots – update

The Committee deferred consideration of the report to enable a further report to be submitted which outlined what direct financial support could be provided by the Council to the businesses which had been affected.

It was agreed also that further discussions be undertaken with the traders and relevant stakeholders to ascertain what support was required.

Smart Belfast: City Innovation programme update

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which updated the Committee on Smart Belfast, including the proposed extension of the Belfast 5G Innovation Regions programme; a proposed twelve-month commission for the City Hall immersive experience; and the outputs of the recent inclusive innovation workshop.

The Committee:

1. Noted the successful completion of the Belfast 5G innovation regions programme and the invitation to attend the showcase event at City Hall at 9.30 am on 5th March.
2. Approved acceptance of the £1.3 million letter of offer to deliver a twelve-month extension of the Belfast 5G IR programme.
3. Noted the success of the City Hall immersive experience and approved the commissioning of the experience for a further twelve months commencing April 2025.
4. Noted the outputs of the recent inclusive innovation workshop and emerging strands of work to take forward this agenda.
5. Approved the provision of additional in-kind staff support of no more than 10 days to support the audit of the Horizon 2020 HUB-IN programme.

Newington Football Club

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 3rd February, agreed to act as the applicant to the Football Fund in respect of Newington Football Club in order to bid for the associated costs of establishing a home pitch for the club at Ballysillan Playing Fields. This decision was subject to due diligence and further work by officers.

Accordingly, the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services submitted a further report which provided two options for the Committee to consider.

After discussion, it was

Moved By Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Committee agrees to proceed with option 2 as set out in the report.

On a vote, fifteen Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was declared carried.

It was agreed also that Urban Villages be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee to provide an overview of the scheme.

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 13th February.

Fleadh Cheoil update

The Committee noted the update on the plans for the event at which the host for the 2026 Fleadh would be announced and approved the expenditure for hospitality as set out in the report.

Requests for Funding

(The Committee agreed that the discussion on this item would not be subject to restrictions and that that part of the meeting be reopened to the press and public).

The Director of Finance reported that the following requests for funding had been received:

1. Belfast Youth Orchestra for funding towards their tour of Italy. No specific amount was requested.
2. Antrim Ladies Gaelic Football and Camogie Club for funding of £20,000 to jointly promote the two associations as well as provision of kit, physical and nutritional advice.
3. Whiterock Child and Family Centre for funding of £500,000 towards the cost of establishing a modern, purpose-built facility.
4. the original request under a Motion from West Well Being for funding of £50,000.
5. £1,100 for the over 70s NI Men's Walking Football Club to assist with participation in a tournament.

Proposal

After a lengthy discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor R-M Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy,

That the Committee agrees to accede to the request from Whiterock Child and Family Centre for funding of £500,000 towards the cost of establishing a modern, purpose-built facility, subject to due diligence being undertaken.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the request be referred for consideration, in the first instance, to the West Area Working Group.

On a vote eight Members voted for the amendment and eleven against and it was declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor R-M Donnelly was put to the meeting, with eleven Members voting for and eight against and was declared carried.

The Committee agreed further to defer consideration of the requests from City of Belfast Youth Orchestra, the Antrim Ladies Gaelic Football and Camogie Club, the West Well Being Centre and the NI over 70s walking football club to allow officers to look at the development of a fund which could support these and similar requests for funding.

Following further discussion in relation to possible similar Neighbourhood Regeneration Funding (NRF) for the other Area Working Groups, the City Solicitor indicated that that a report on the Annual review of the NRF was due to be submitted to the Committee in March and this would include those issues which had been raised by the Members.

The Committee agreed to this course of action.

Request from UTV to film at St George's Market

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from UTV to film at St George's Market for a new series of Hidden NI.

The Committee:

- noted the proposed filming at St George's Market as part of a new UTV series; and
- granted approval for the filming proposal, subject to the Markets Management Team ensuring that all relevant assurances are in place.

Events to mark the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal Services presented a report in relation to proposals to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

The Committee:

- approved the proposed programme of events to be organised by the Council 8th May 2025, together with the associated costs of up to £30,000; and
- agreed to establish a small grant scheme up to the value of £70,000 for local communities to organise street parties to mark VE day on 8th May 2025 and delegated authority to the Director to award the grants.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

**Report - Response received from Belfast
Health Trust re NOM - Removal of Knockbreda
Out of Hours Doctors Services**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting held on 2nd December, 2024, it was agreed to write to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust regarding the Notice of Motion in relation to the Removal of Knockbreda Out of Hours Doctors Services.

The Committee was advised that a response has been received from Ms Maureen Edwards, Interim Chief Executive, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

In her response she had advised that this motion was in opposition to the Trust's proposal regarding its reconfiguration of General Practice Out Of Hours from two sites to one, with the introduction of a multi-disciplinary team.

The proposal was issued for consultation on 3rd October 2024 and had closed on 2nd January 2025. The Trust would now take time to review the Council's response, along with all the other responses and feedback received to inform its decision making on the way forward in accordance with its statutory responsibilities.

The Trust would produce an outcome report detailing the feedback received and its decision on the proposal in due course. The Trust would ensure that this was shared with the Council on endorsement by the Trust Board.

The Committee noted the correspondence and agreed to the closure of the motion.

**Response received from Minister for Infrastructure
re Hill Street, Belfast - Pedestrianisation**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting held on 1st October, 2024, it was agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to ask that he revisits the decision to put work on the pedestrianisation of Hill Street on hold.

The Committee was advised that a response has been received from Ms Liz Kimmins, Minister for Infrastructure.

In her response she apologised for the delay in responding to the Council and, that, unfortunately significant staffing constraints within Eastern Division was having an impact on response times.

An informal consultation on the proposal to pedestrianise Hill Street had been carried out for which the Department got nine replies. While most were in favour of the pedestrianisation scheme, the majority wanted to retain full vehicle access. However, this would not be in keeping with the objective of a pedestrianised area which was to remove traffic during certain periods for the general benefit of pedestrians.

Therefore, this required further engagement with individual businesses to explain this position and to attempt to negotiate a scheme which worked for everyone.

Unfortunately, due to the extensive time that this type of engagement required, and the current significant pressures on staff as well as their involvement with high priority work such as the Belfast Grand Central Station, the Sydenham Bypass resurfacing scheme and the McKinsty Road/ Derriaghy Road/ The Cutts improvement scheme, it was necessary to put work on the Hill Street proposal on hold at present.

Officials were keeping the position under review and would hope to follow up the informal consultation feedback in the coming months as staffing resource permitted.

The Committee noted the correspondence as set out in the report and agreed that a further letter be forwarded to ascertain whether Hill Street is included in the Eastern Transport Plan and seeking further clarification in relation to the consultation.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Planning Information

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on major planning applications and applications which had been determined by the Planning Committee.

LGSC Network of Diversity Ambassadors and The Rainbow Project, HereNI and Cara-Friend Centenary event

The Director of Human Resources submitted the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) Diversity Ambassador network and sponsorship of/attendance at the Rainbow Project, HereNI and Cara-Friend Centenary event.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Our Equality and Diversity Action Plan outlines how we will promote equality and diversity in our ambitions to create a city in which people love to live, learn, invest, work and visit. It also contributes to our compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Actions are categorised under the following corporate plan priorities:

- Growing an inclusive economy
- Living here
- Cross cutting
- Organisational priorities

3.2 The Local Government Equality and Diversity Group prioritises and influences equality, good relations, diversity and inclusion initiatives across local government in Northern Ireland. Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services is the current chair of the Group which attempts to bring together best practice across the sector and in so doing, seeks to integrate the priorities of the Group with the ongoing work of individual Councils. The Group identified a key implementation initiative: establishing a network of Diversity Ambassadors to actively advance the equality and diversity agenda within Councils.

3.3 The Diversity Ambassadors will work within their Council and community to support delivery of the regional Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan and help to drive behavioural and cultural change across the local government sector. The role of the Diversity Ambassador is important because they will work at all levels helping to create a fair, accepting, inclusive culture which in turn will help to reduce the occurrence of discrimination allowing everyone to feel welcome, cared for, safe and valued. Please see Diversity Ambassador Role Specification attached at Appendix 1.

3.4 In May 2023 all councils were asked to confirm the names of elected members or senior officers in diversity and inclusion champion or ambassador roles so that they could be invited to a programme of events for Diversity Ambassadors. The current list of BCC Diversity Ambassadors is as follows:

Elected member ambassadors.

Cllr Aine McCabe - Gender
Cllr Micky Murray - LGBTQIA+
Cllr Anthony Flynn - LGBTQIA+
Cllr Seamus De Faoite - LGBTQIA+
Cllr Ruth Brooks - Disability

In addition, a number of elected members in the Disability Working Group also asked that they be invited to the programme of events.

Officer ambassadors.

Kate Bentley - LGBTQIA+
John Tully - Race
Christine Sheridan -all areas
Nora Largey - all areas
Catherine Christy - all areas
Michael Johnston - Disability

- 3.5 From October 2023 to November 2024, a series of best practice events and information sessions took place, consisting of five sessions, offering Diversity Ambassadors opportunities to exchange insights and engage with subject experts. These sessions were facilitated by the Commission and supported by Equality and Diversity Group members Bronagh Hinds (DemocraShe) and Bernie Kelly (Vice Chair of the Local Government Staff Commission). A number of Belfast City Council diversity projects and initiatives were showcased across the events.
- 3.6 Looking ahead, the initiative aims to formalise a Diversity Ambassador Network to sustain collaboration, learning, and the sharing of best practices across Councils. In December 2024 the LGSC sought expressions of interest from elected member ambassadors and officer ambassadors across all 11 councils to co-chair the network going forward. Catherine Christy, Corporate HR Manager – Development, in Belfast City Council and Cllr Noeleen Hays, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, have been invited to co-chair the network in 2025/26. See Network Terms of Reference attached for further information.
- 3.7 **The Rainbow Project, HereNI and CaraFriend Centenary event**
- An event is being held in Titanic Belfast on 8 March 2025, to celebrate a combined century of support and advocacy from three of Northern Ireland's LGBTQIA+ organisations: The Rainbow Project, HereNI, and CaraFriend. Adding to the significance of this occasion, the prestigious Tolerantia Awards will also form part of this celebration. This renowned event honours individuals and organisations that have made substantial contributions to the promotion of tolerance and human rights across Europe. The Rainbow Project is a member of the Tolerantia Alliance and last hosted these awards in Belfast which were sponsored by the Council, back in 2016.
- 3.8 As part of its agreed LGBTQIA+ diversity action plan commitment, the Council will be one of the named sponsors of the event, which includes a table for 10. Our LGBTQIA+, elected member and senior officer ambassadors have been invited to attend as well as members of the staff LGBTQIA+

network 'Proud', who commit a considerable amount of personal time and effort on top of their day jobs to support and manage the network.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications to this report as associated costs are included the agreed LGBTQIA+ diversity action plan.

3.10 Human Resources

There are no human resources implications to this report.

3.11 Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications

The delivery of the Councils equality, diversity and inclusion projects and initiatives will have a positive impact on our workforce and internal operations as well as communities across our city."

The Committee noted the content of this report and agreed that Councillor P. Donnelly be included as an elected Member ambassador.

Summer Schemes – Additional Needs

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd March 2024, it had agreed to provide the City and Neighbourhood Services Department with an additional amount of £80,000 to deliver a pilot project to support summer schemes for children with additional needs. Following successful delivery of the pilot in 2024, an amount of £80,000 was allocated within the Departmental estimates to deliver the programme in 2025.

At the People and Communities Committee meeting on 4th February 2025, the Members had agreed an allocation model of £20,000 per area, north, south, east and west, and the eligibility criteria. The Members had further agreed that a report be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee seeking an additional amount of £40,000, to a total of £120,000, to extend the impact of the scheme.

The Committee approved the request from the People and Communities Committee and agreed to provide an additional amount of £40,000 funding for summer schemes for children with additional needs, with an amount of £10,000 to be allocated to north, south, east and west Belfast.

**Draft response to Department for
Communities Fuel Poverty Strategy**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to submit for the consideration of Committee a draft corporate response to the Department for Communities (DfC) draft Fuel Poverty Strategy consultation.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee are asked to:

- i. note the draft Fuel Poverty Strategy being consulted upon – [CLICK LINK](#)**
- ii. consider the draft Council response attached at Appendix 1;**
- iii. agree that the draft Council response is submitted to the Department for Communities**

3.0 Main report

3.1 The Department for Communities recently launched a consultation on a draft Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland which sets out a proposed framework for addressing fuel poverty and its impacts.

3.2 DfC defines fuel poverty as the inability of a household to heat and power their home adequately. It is affected by the cost of energy, the energy efficiency of the home and energy needs of those living in it, and household income. When people cannot heat their homes adequately it can lead to poor mental and physical health.

3.3 This strategy proposes a vision of a Warm, Healthy Home for Everyone, supported by 4 principles. It contains a number of proposed actions that will help us achieve the following objectives to:

- 1. Make homes more energy efficient**
- 2. Collaborate and build capacity**
- 3. Protect consumers**

3.4 The draft Strategy also proposes a new approach to measuring and reporting on fuel poverty and proposals for the Department’s new Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency scheme.

- 3.5** As part of the recent refresh of the Belfast Agenda (City's Community Plan), a key and immediate area of concern emerging from key stakeholder groups, community and voluntary sector representatives, citizens, communities of interest and elected Members, was the growing fuel poverty crisis facing the city and communities. There was a strong call to action for community planning partners to work with NICS Departments to move quickly to bring forward immediate and integrated measures to support vulnerable people alongside helping inform the development on long-term and sustainable approach and underpinning strategies, policies and programmes.
- 3.6** There is little doubt that the scale and complexity of challenges with a dangerous combination of higher energy prices, reduced incomes, and leaky, energy inefficient housing could create the perfect storm and push many households further into fuel poverty. These increases come at a time when many household budgets are already stretched thin.
- 3.7** Living in fuel poverty can severely affect a person's life in a wide range of ways, on physical and mental health, household finances, the economy and ultimately on people's quality of life.
- 3.8** Members will be aware of the significant investment made by the Council over recent years in helping to alleviate the impact of fuel poverty and the cost-of-living crisis. The Council would highlight the collaboration which has taken place with DfC, and the role of Council working closely with community partners to get significant funding and support to those impacted by fuel poverty across the city. There is no doubt of the effectiveness and impact of central and local government working together with communities in responding together in times of emergency.
- 3.9** While we understand and embrace the fact that its causes are complex and its consequences are multiple, there is an opportunity through community planning to create the environment and bring the key stakeholders together to develop achievable actions. Whilst immediate and practical interventions and support can be brought forward to help mitigate the effects of fuel poverty; we would commend that a broader and integrated programme and longer-term strategy and associated resources are required to seek to eradicate fuel poverty within Belfast and wider region.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 There are no financial or human resource implications arising directly from this report.

**Equality or Good Relations Implications /
Rural Needs Assessment**

- 3.11 There are no equality/ good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.”

The Committee:

- i. noted the draft Fuel Poverty Strategy being consulted upon;
- ii. approved the draft Council response attached at Appendix 1 to the report; and
- iii. agreed that the draft Council response be submitted to the Department for Communities

Public Health Agency Draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy presented the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to bring to the attention of Members the draft PHA Corporate Plan (2025-2030) recently published for consultation and to outline a proposed approach to responding.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee are asked to:

- i. note the draft Public Health Authority Corporate Plan (2025-2030) [CLICK HERE.](#)
- ii. consider and agree the proposed short draft response, as set out at para 3.5 below
- iii. agree that the draft Council response be submitted to the PHA by the 28th February 2025 deadline albeit remaining subject to Full Council ratification.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 The Public Health Agency recently launched a consultation on its draft Corporate Plan for the period 2025-2030. The draft Plan sets out the strategic direction for the PHA for the next five years in terms of what they will do and how they will

work as an organisation. A copy of the draft Plan is available via [CLICK HERE](#).

- 3.2 The PHA endeavours to translate the Health and Social Care values into its culture by ‘putting individuals and communities at the heart of everything we do, acting with openness and honesty and treating people with dignity, respect and compassion; working together in partnership to improve the quality of life of those we serve, listening to and involving individuals and communities; valuing, developing and empowering our staff and striving for excellence and innovation; being evidence led and outcomes focused’.
- 3.3 The Plan sets out a framework for delivery which is based on the following thematic areas of focus:



- 3.4 There is a strong emphasis on addressing health inequalities and developing targeted and place-based approaches where needed for those more vulnerable in our society.

Belfast City Council Response

- 3.5 It is recommended that the Council respond to confirm its support for the draft Plan and particularly welcoming the focus on supporting those most vulnerable in our city and recognising the need for and benefit of place-based approaches. In responding we would also highlight the joint work already underway between the Council, the PHA and other city and community partners through the Belfast Agenda and shared priorities such as complex lives. We would suggest that Belfast welcomes the opportunity to continue to work closely with colleagues within PHA to continue to bring forward the prototype delivery models and test and learn demonstrator programmes which can be scaled up across the region.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.6 There are no financial or human resource implications arising directly from this report.

**Equality or Good Relations Implications /
Rural Needs Assessment**

- 3.7 There are no equality/ good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.”

The Committee:

- i. noted the draft Public Health Authority Corporate Plan (2025-2030);
- ii. agreed the proposed short draft response, as set out at para 3.5; and
- iii. agreed that the draft Council response be submitted to the PHA by the 28th February 2025 deadline albeit remaining subject to Full Council ratification.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Portfolio Manager presented the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The Council’s Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council’s Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents a request for an approval under the Capital Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Capital Programme:**
 - **IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall** – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this

project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of up to £67,000 be allocated.

- Fleet Replacement Programme 2025/26 – Lord Mayor’s official car – Note the further information provided on the replacement of the Lord Mayor’s official car as part of the Fleet Programme for 2025/26.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Physical Programme

Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Council also delivers externally focused funding streams such as Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Local Investment Fund (LIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF), as well as numerous physical programmes and standalone projects that we deliver for central government. Our funding partners include National Lottery Heritage Fund, SEUPB PeacePLUS, the Executive Office, DfC, DfI including the Living with Water Programme, DAERA, Ulster Garden Villages, Levelling Up Fund (LUF), UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and others. When appropriate, the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange site visits to any projects that have been completed.

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

- 3.2 Members are aware of the scale of the Council’s Physical Programme via a range of internal and external funding streams. Members have agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage movement
IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall	Procurement of replacement firewall hardware	Stage 3 – Committed: With a maximum budget allocation of up to £67,000

3.3 IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall

This project is part of the overall IT Programme and will replace and licence new firewall hardware. In October 2024 this project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at *Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk* pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. An update was to be brought back to Committee along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of up to £67,000 be allocated.

3.4 Capital Programme - Fleet Programme 2025/26 - replacement of the Lord Mayor's car

Members will recall that in January an update was presented on the Fleet Programme for 2025/26 including the replacement of the Lord Mayor's official car. Members noted the agreed Fleet Programme for 2025/26, but agreed to defer consideration of the replacement of the Lord Mayor's official car until further information had been provided to the Committee on the specification and the cost. As reported, the current lease of the Lord Mayor's official car is due to end in October. Due to delivery lead times it is anticipated to take a minimum of six months to acquire the new replacement lease/hire vehicle once ordered.

3.5 The Fleet Unit have engaged with the Lord Mayor's Unit on the model of the replacement vehicle to ensure that the requirements, duties and obligations of the Office of the Lord Mayor are considered along with mileage requirements and capability. In keeping with the Council's previous decision the replacement car will be fully electric. The models which meet the operational loading space and resilience requirements are summarised in the table below. Further detail including other options is also attached at Appendix 1.

3.6 Summary of specifications and costs:

Current vehicle:	Occupant seats	Electric range (miles)	Annual cost	Total cost
<i>Current vehicle - Audi ETron (procured in 2020)</i>	5	204	£8,439	£33,756

Replacement models:	Occupant seats	Electric range (miles)	Annual cost estimate of lease	Total cost estimate of lease (4 years)
BMW i5 Saloon 442kW M60 xDrive 84kWh	5	383	£11,063	£44,252
BMW i7 Saloon 485kW M70 xDrive 105.7kWh	5	365	£16,257	£65,028
Mercedes Benz EQS Saloon 450 + 265kW Business Class 118kWh	5	430	£13,815	£55,260
Audi ETron GT Saloon 435kWh S Launch Edition	5	423	£16,795	£67,180

The current annual lease cost of the Lord Mayor’s official vehicle is £8,439 (from 2020) and a total of £33,756 over the four year contract period. To replace the current vehicle with the same model, the total cost is estimated at £67,180 over four years which would constitute a significant increase compared to the previous procurement exercise. Taking account of the required seating and load space needs, long journey timely returns and lease/hire cost it is recommended that the BMW i5 4 door saloon best meets all round operational requirements and overall value for money over a four year contract period. The cost estimate for this preferred option over four years is approximately £44,250. Members are asked to note the further information provided on the replacement of the Lord Mayor’s official car as part of the Fleet Programme for 2025/26.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial Implications –

IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall - a maximum of £67,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Fleet Replacement Programme 2025/26 – this is an existing rolling allocation of £2.2m on the Capital Programme relating to the Council’s fleet including the replacement of the Lord Mayor’s official car, estimated at £44,250.

Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver.

3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.”

The Committee:

- **IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall** – Noted that a satisfactory tender return had been received and that the Director of Finance had confirmed that this project was within the affordability limits of the Council and agreed that a maximum of up to £67,000 be allocated.
- **Fleet Replacement Programme 2025/26 – Lord Mayor’s official car** – Noted the further information provided on the replacement of the Lord Mayor’s official car as part of the Fleet Programme for 2025/26 and agreed to the lease of the KIA EV6 Electric Estate for a period of 4 years.

Assets Management

The Committee:

- i) **Off-Street Car Parks – Title Regularisation**
Noted the position and the legal steps now required by the Council in order to perfect and regularise title to portions of the off-street car park lands acquired from DRD on 1st April 2015 by virtue of the Scheme for the Transfer of Designated Off-Street Car Park Assets and Liabilities (the Transfer Scheme).
- ii) **Ballygomartin Road Site – proposed lease of land to Black Mountain Shared Space**
Approved the lease of land to Black Mountain Shared Space for the development of BMSS Phase 2.

- iii) **Exchange Street - Acquisition of lands at Exchange Street**
Approved the acquisition of lands at Exchange Street by way of vesting.
- iv) **Lands at Springhill Park**
Delegated authority to the Director to engage with the NIHE regarding a temporary licence to allow the Executive access for construction works at Ballymurphy.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- Approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1), with the exception of the tender regarding the appointment of public analyst to enable further information to be provided.
- Approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2).
- Approve the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3).
- Noted the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4).
- Noted the process changes detailed in Section 6.0 Procurement Governance – STAs:

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
To provide automatic patching of non-Windows software	Up to 3 years	£43,533	P Gribben	Software to help reduce the risk of a serious cyber security attack or a significant data breach.
Renewal of Server and Cloud Enrolment (SCE) agreement with Microsoft for the use of SQL Database products	Up to 3 years	£90,000	P Gribben	Licensing agreement to allow the use of Microsoft SQL Database products (and any future releases) as well as entitling the Council to raise support calls if needed
Hire of 2 x RCV 18ton vehicles	Up to 1 year	£105,560	D Sales	Continue hire of 2x 18t RCV's to pilot trail to gain access to narrow streets in Belfast.
Supply of procurement cards	Up to 5 years	£1,123,500	T Wallace	Used for expenditure that cannot be procured through finance system ordering processes i.e. online or low value

				purchases. Use of cards generates 1% cashback (approx. £3k p.a.)
Appointment of a public analyst	Up to 4 years	£294,000	S Toland	The Food Safety (NI) Order 1991 (Article 27 (1)) requires the Council to appoint suitably qualified persons as Public Analysts within the district of the Council, for the purpose of examining and analysing food samples to determine compliance with food safety, compositional and labelling requirements. Joint procurement exercise being overseen by Antrim and Newtownabbey Council on behalf of all 11 local councils

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Housing Benefit system (iWorld) for NIHE	Up to 2 years	£759,329	S McNicholl	The EDRM and Housing Benefits systems are used by NI Housing Executive and are proprietary as the system has been developed to meet NI legislative requirements . (DM & iWorld). This STA is to cover the continued use of this system.	NEC Software Solutions UK Ltd	3. Technical reasons

				This is fully funded by NIHE.		
Broadcast system for Committee rooms	Up to 5 years	£120,000	S McNicholl	<p>Provision of end-to-end services and support (hardware, software and connectivity) to allow both committee and council meetings to be broadcast over the internet to members of the public. This solution integrates directly with the Modern.gov committee management software. The upgraded broadcasting setup will integrate with the current meeting room audio-visual equipment and any future room setup. Public-I Group is only supplier available who are fully integrated with modern.gov for public broadcasting</p>	Public-I Group	7. Technical characteristics
Support and maintenance of PTX software and	Up to 4 years	£142,000	S McNicholl	PTX has recently been configured	Bottomline Technologies	7. Technical characteristics

associated transform package				for compatibility with the new E5 Finance system. This STA is to cover the continued use of this system. Changes in supplier would result in new system configuration , significant additional costs and lead to a break in payments services		
MTU air conditioning repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 3 months	£15,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 14/06/2024; retrospective spend for 9 months at £45,000; remaining	BL Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Ltd	11. Other

				contract duration up to 3 months at £15,000 – see Table 4.		
MTC for fire & intruder repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 3 months	£18,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 31/01/2024; retrospective spend for 13 months at £77k; remaining contract duration up 3 months at £18k – see Table 4	Radiocontact Ltd	11. Other
MTC High level lighting repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 3 months	£32,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to	Braham Electrical Ltd	11. Other

				<p>the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 12/09/2024; retrospective spend for 6 months at £63k; remaining contract duration up 3 months at £32k – see Table 4.</p>		
<p>MTC Roller Shutter 24/7 callout services and repairs</p>	<p>Up to 2 months</p>	<p>£8,000</p>	<p>S Grimes</p>	<p>STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 31/12/2023; retrospective spend for 13 months at £52k; remaining contract duration up 2</p>	<p>DW Industrial Doors</p>	<p>11. Other</p>

				month at £8k – see Table 4.		
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Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Current Contract Duration	Modification (Period & Est. Value)	SRO	Description	Supplier
MTC installation of new soft floor covering for repairs, maintenance & minor works	Up to 3 years	Additional 3 months and £15,000	S Grimes	Extension required to ensure continuity of service until the new tender is in place.	JJ Hennebry & Sons Ltd
MTC for swimming pools filtration systems repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 3 years	Additional 5 months and £80,000	S Grimes	Extension required to ensure continuity of service and meet legislative maintenance requirements until the new tender is in place.	WJM Building Services Ltd
T1856 provision of a facilities management service at the Mary Peters Track	Up to 6.5 years	Additional 1 year and £160,049	S Leonard	Contract extension of 1 year is required to allow sufficient time for Council to complete stakeholder engagement, as requested by PGL. And allow time to explore alternative management options for the site following the stakeholder engagement. The original contract expiry date was 30/09/2023. 6 months extension and £65,000 approved by SP&R in Aug 23. 6 months extension and £110,073.50 approved by SP&R in Mar 24. 6 months extension and £80,024.50 approved by SP&R in Aug 24.	Athletics NI

Supply and delivery of paint and sundries	Up to 4 years	Additional 4 months and £6,000	S Grimes	Extension required to ensure continuity of supplies until the new tender is in place.	PPG Architectural Coatings UK Ltd
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Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
MTU air conditioning repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 9 months	£45,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 14/06/2024; retrospective spend for 9 months at £45,000; remaining contract duration up to 3 months at £15,000 – see Table 2.	BL Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Ltd	11. Other
MTC for fire & intruder repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 13 months	£77,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete.	Radiocontact	11. Other

				Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 31/01/2024; retrospective spend for 13 months at £77k; remaining contract duration up 3 months at £18k – see Table 4		
MTC high level lighting repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 6 months	£63,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 12/09/2024; retrospective spend for 6	Braham Ltd	11. Other

				months at £63k; remaining contract duration up 3 months at £32k – see Table 4.		
MTC roller shutter 24/7 callout services and repairs	Up to 13 months	£52,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 31/12/2023; retrospective spend for 13 months at £52k; remaining contract duration up 2 months at £8k – see Table 4.	DW Industrial Doors	11. Other

Commercial and Procurement Services
Social Value Working Group update

The Committee noted the Social Value Procurement Policy 'SVPP' Delivery Report.

Equality and Good Relations

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership
Meeting on 10th February 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 10th February 2025 including:

**Presentation from the Red Cross - PeacePlus
Right Support: Right Time Project**

- Presentation deferred until a further SCP Meeting.

Update on Community Recovery Fund

- The Partnership noted an update regarding the amendments to the Community Recovery Action Plan as agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee S & R on 27th January 2025.

PEACE IV – Secretariat Update

- The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.

**PEACEPLUS Belfast City Council
Local Community Action Plan – Update**

- The Partnership noted the contents of the report and agreed to delegate authority to the PEACE Programme Manager and Lead Officer to approve administrative changes to projects, as part of the change control process the PEACEPLUS Programme risk register as detailed in Appendix III and recommends that the Strategic Policy and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report and agree recommendations above.

Update from Partnership Members

- There was no update from SCP Members.

AOB

- The Good Relations Manager welcomed Melanie Holmes-Watson as the new recently appointed Good Relations Officer
- Members agreed to undertake a walking tour of the Forth Meadow Greenway on Thursday, 27th March.

Operational Issues

**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the provision of Hospitality**

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Choice Housing Ireland	8 April 2025	Celebration of Achievement for courses and volunteering completed as part of investment in the community and leadership programme. Numbers attending: 50	C & D	None	
Belfast Buildings Trust	2 May 2025	Grand Final of the Northern Ireland Schools Debating Competition that encourages debate and civic engagement in young people attracting 80 teams during the competition. Numbers attending: 140	D	None	
Relatives for Justice	19 May 2025	Launch of a new "Remembering Quilt" - a series of quilts handcrafted by families affected by the conflict to remember those who lost their lives,	C	None	

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		<p>representing their stories, memories, and the legacy they leave behind.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 150</p>			
Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)	20 May 2025	<p>25-year anniversary of PEACE programmes – lunch and speeches to reflect and sharing insights of the past 25 years and lessons learned.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 50 - 100.</p>	C	None	Tea and Coffee Reception as significant anniversary
Now Group	4 June 2025	<p>Now Graduation Ceremony - annual celebration of the work of trainees supported by the Now Group and completion of the training programme.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 300 - 400</p>	D	None	
Belfast Trust Carer Support Service	9 June 2025	<p>Launch of Belfast Trust Carers Strategy and Celebration of Carers Week</p>	C	Room hire £450	

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		<p>2025 – celebrate and raise awareness of the contribution unpaid carers give to the Trust and how trust will support them.</p> <p>Numbers attending: 100</p>			
Queen's University Belfast Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences	7 August 2025	<p>International Summer School Gala Dinner to mark the end of a three-week International Summer School hosted QUB- drinks reception and dinner and certificate presentation.</p> <p>Numbers attending: 60 - 120</p>	A, B and C	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	
Contact Centre Network NI	6 November 2025	<p>CCNNI Awards 2025 Drinks Reception, Awards, Dinner and entertainment for customer service industry.</p> <p>Numbers attending: 250 – 300</p>	B & D	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	
Samaritans	18 November 2025	<p>10th Anniversary of Free Call service and achievements of volunteers</p>	C	None	Tea and Coffee Reception as significant anniversary

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		<p>– reception and speeches from volunteers and those people helped by Samaritans.</p> <p>Numbers attending: 150</p>			
Queen's University Belfast Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences	13 December 2025	<p>Northeastern University Farewell Dinner 150 US students who have participated in the N.U.in Programme linked Sister City partnership with Boston.</p> <p>Numbers attending: 150</p>	A & B	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	
The Scout Association, Northern Ireland Scout Council	9 January 2026	<p>Chief Scout's Award and Queen's Scout Award Presentation – 120 young people receiving awards and attending a reception.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 500</p>	B & D	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	
Belfast University of the Third Age	26 February 2026	<p>Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Belfast u3a Drinks Reception, Dinner, Presentations, and entertainment.</p>	C	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	Drinks Reception as significant anniversary

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		Numbers attending – 240 - 260			
International Cancer Imaging Society	24 September 2026	Conference Dinner for the: 25th International Cancer Imaging Society Annual Conference for guests attending 3-day conference at Europa Hotel. Numbers attending: 150 - 200	A & B	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	
Belmont Bowling Club	20 August 2027	150th Anniversary Celebration Drinks Reception, Dinner, Presentations, And Entertainment. Numbers Attending: 330 - 360	C & D	None	Drinks Reception as significant anniversary

Request for the Use of City Hall Grounds- OrangeFest – 12th July 2025

The Committee was reminded that requests for the use of City Hall and its grounds are normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using criteria agreed for this purpose. Occasionally, however, it was necessary to place such requests directly before the Committee, and the request set out below falls into this category.

The proposed event 'OrangeFest' would take place on the front west lawn only and areas such as the East Lawn, the Titanic Garden and Cenotaph would remain open to the public. Access to the City Hall building would not be affected. It would involve a number of stalls in City Hall grounds. The organisers' estimate of attendance was 3,000 to 5,000 people.

The event would be free to enter. The organiser would provide stewarding/marshalling staff and first aiders and would comply with the Council's standard conditions for hire etc.

The Committee was also advised that, for many years, the Orange Order had used the Cenotaph for a short commemorative ceremony on the morning of the main parade, following which participants re-join the main parade, and this would be the case again on 12th July 2025.

The Committee:

1. Authorised the use of City Hall grounds on 12th July 2025 for Orange Fest (*subject to securing funding*); and
2. Authorised the event to take place on the basis of submission of an event management plan and risk assessment and appointment of an event controller to ensure delivery of a safe public event.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the City Hall/
City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 12th February.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Social
Policy Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 11th February.

**Attendance at the Northern Ireland
Local Government Association Awards**

The Committee granted approval for the booking of up to two tables at the NILGA Awards and authorised the attendance of 1 representative of each of the Parties, together with the appropriate Council officers.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the City
Regeneration Members Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the City Regeneration Members Working Group of 29th January.

Chairperson